



A Minor Setback for a Major Comeback By: Austin Rader

2005. George W. Bush started his second term as President. YouTube was launched. Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire was released. The tragedy of Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Lance Armstrong won his seventh straight (a record) Tour de France before his scheduled retirement. Heck, The Chicago White Sox won the World Series.

This was the last time LeBron James missed the playoffs.

LeBron James has had immense expectations and he has exceeded all of them. The only thing left for LeBron to accomplish is to match or break Michael Jordan's titles. On a personal level, LeBron breaking Kareem's all time scoring record would be almost as big of a milestone for the future Hall of Famer. But matching Jordan's six rings would be incredible for LeBron.

I am writing this article to argue that LeBron missing the playoffs for just the third time in his career is not necessarily a bad thing. His first season in Los Angeles had its ups and downs. The peak came on Christmas Day when the Lakers went to Golden State and blew out the Warriors, in front of a nationally televised audience. LeBron left the game in the third quarter with a groin injury. By the time he returned six weeks later, the Lakers were no longer considered a playoff team. Lonzo Ball went down a week later and then the Lakers season spiraled out of control.

After a close home loss to the Denver Nuggets in early March, it started to become clear that the Lakers were missing the playoffs.

What people don't talk about is that this could be the best thing to happen to LeBron's career in the long run.

LeBron James is the busiest man in the NBA. He's been the face of the NBA for so many years. He also has been to nine straight NBA Finals. His offseason has been from Mid June to October (when training camp begins). That's not a very long offseason to improve your game although LeBron seems to get better at new things after each offseason. Everyone else in the NBA enjoys a break from early April until September. Not LeBron. He barely has a break to go the beach with his kids!

It's crazy to think a player can play a hundred games in a season only to get three months off and then go right back and play another 100 games for NINE straight seasons. For LeBron, he has averaged almost 40 minutes a game, and over 100 games a season; that's 4,000 minutes a year! An average player will play only 82 games and 30 minutes a game, or less than 2,500 minutes a season. And he's been doing this for nine years in a row!

That's just a normal year in the life of LeBron James. Until Now.

The Lakers showed improvement this year and their promising young core is getting better. Having LeBron on their team has brought unrealistic expectations but has also improved their development at a faster pace.

With a long offseason, the Lakers will have to find a new coach, and find a new President of Basketball Operations. They will also have to make pitches for the stars that are about to go into free agency. Can they find the "magic"?

All LeBron needs is one more superstar on this team and he will take the Lakers to new heights that couldn't be reached in year one.

With LeBron getting a longer offseason to rest his body and improve his game, he will also be able to help pitch these incoming free agents such as Demarcus Cousins, Jimmy Butler, Kyrie Irving, Kawhi Leonard and Klay Thompson to try to team up with him in Los Angeles. If the Lakers could land just one of those stars, the Lakers will be a playoff team and could make noise in June of 2020.

LeBron's decision to go to Los Angeles in the Summer of 2018 was compared to his decision to go to Miami in 2010. However, unlike in Miami, LeBron had to win more than one title for it to be considered a success. In Cleveland, LeBron winning one was good enough for the city.

If LeBron can help bring the Lakers their 17th championship, then his stint with the Lakers would be a success.

LeBron joined the Laker's knowing winning a title in year one would be a tough goal to reach. However, every year should be easier as this young core will start to blossom. The pressure will be on for LeBron to bring the Lakers back to the promise land in year two.

But first, LeBron needs to rest up and wait for his groin to fully heal. Then he will have a championship offseason.

This is James's most important offseason of his career.

Every season for LeBron James is like a reality TV Show. Season 17 will be if LeBron can rise back to the top of the NBA's biggest stage.

And this comeback story is just getting started. That's what's on the radar.

Stay tuned...